The objective of the scheme is to increase production and productivity of crops through exploiting abundant ground/surface water, in the Eastern India. The scheme is a back-ended credit linked one and is being implemented through the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development.

As regards pulses, assistance is provided for purchase of breeder seed, production of foundation seed, production and distribution of certified seed, distribution of seed minikits etc. under the centrally sponsored scheme of Integrated Scheme for Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize (ISOPOM) launched in April 2004.

The National Population Policy 2000 envisages to address the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure, and health personnel and to provide integrated service delivery for basic reproductive and child health care. The medium-term objective is to bring the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) to replacement levels by 2010. In pursuance of these objectives various National Socio Demographic Goals have been set which include *inter alia:*

* Promote delayed marriage for girls, not earlier than age 18 and preferably after 20 years of age.
* Achieve universal access to information/counselling, and services for fertility regulation and contraception with a wide basket of choices.
* Promote vigorously the small family norm to achieve replacement levels of TFR.

Helping debt ridden farmers

2042. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the past few years, over 4000 farmers, many from the cotton and dryland belt of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, parts of Kerala and Punjab have killed themselves as they were trapped in a vicious circle of debt, crop failure, penury and extreme hopelessness;

(b) whether Government are aware of the fact that Indian agriculture is getting increasingly risky, expensive and water dependent; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to help the farmers come out of their debts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The cases of suicide have been reported from the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab. As reported by the State Governments, the agriculture-related causes for committing suicide by farmers are crop loss, indebtedness, lack of alternative employment opportunities, etc. The number of suicide cases as reported by the State Governments during the past two years is given in the enclosed Statement. (*See* below)

(b) and (c) Recent years have witnessed significant deceleration in productivity (yield/hectare) in case of a number of major crops, which in turn have contributed to higher costs of production. As regards risks the uncertainty of weather, especially failure of monsoon, is the most important factor because around 60 per cent of the net sown area in the country depends on rainfall for agriculture. Reduction in the proportion of rainfed area pre supposes significant increase in public investment so as to bring about increase in area under irrigation.

Fluctuations in agricultural production adversely affect the financial position of farmers. In order to help farmers to tide over the situation, the Government announced in June, 2004 several credit-related measures like doubling the flow of credit in three years, enhancing the coverage of institutional credit through Kisan Credit Cards, restructuring of loans etc.

The strategies formulated by the Government for making the agriculture sector more vibrant and dynamic so as to increase production and productivity also include: (i) strengthening of cooperative credit structure; (ii) ensuring the timely availability of quality inputs; (iii) promoting farmer-friendly, demand-driven agriculture extension system; (iv) accelerated diversification to high value crops including horticulture activities; (v) strengthening infrastructure and the supply chain; (vi) optimizing the efficient utilization of available water resources through micro-irrigation and enhancing the sustainability of dry-land/rainfed farming system; (vii) reforming agricultural markets, and widespread use of post-harvest technology; and (viii) putting in place a broader spectrum of risk management apparatus for farmers.

Statement

Cases pertaining to suicide committed by Farmers in various States

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Period	No. (Based on the figures Reported by State Govts.)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	2003-04	258
		2004-05 (upto 31/12/2004)	758
2.	Karnataka***	2003-04	708
		2004-05 (upto 28/2/2005	216
3.	Maharashtra	2003	180
		2004	524
4.	Punjab	2003	2
		2004	-
5.	Kerala	2003	40
		2004	96
6.	Tamil Nadu	2004-05 (upto 30/9/04)	31

***Note:** As per the information furnished by the State Government of Karnataka, the figures are on the basis of records maintained by the State Agriculture Department.

Spurious Bt. cotton seeds

2045. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has come to the notice of Government that unlicensed Bt. cotton seeds have made their way into the market in a big way; if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is a fact that these illicit Bt. cotton seeds fail to germinate;

(c) whether cotton farmers are likely to suffer heavy loss as a result thereof;